

LOOK TO THE LAND FOR CLEANER WATER

THE WATERSHED APPROACH – MAKING CHANGES ON THE LAND TO KEEP POLLUTION OUT OF OUR WATER – IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN IOWA

You know you want to clean up your river or protect your local lake – but where do you start? While working in the stream or lake makes a difference, the key is looking to the land. By keeping pollution from washing into the water in the first place, you can protect the work you do in the water and preserve improvements.

TAKING A WATERSHED APPROACH

A watershed is the area of land that drains into a river, stream or lake. In a watershed (sometimes called a “basin”), water flows downhill to streams, which flow into larger streams that empty into a river or lake. We all live in a watershed, and they can be as small as a few blocks running into a creek, or large - think of all the land that drains into rivers that flow into the Mississippi River.

When it rains or snow melts, water running over the landscape can pick up pollutants and carry them into water. By changing how we manage our fields, yards and other lands, we can improve water and our quality of life. Since most land in Iowa is privately owned, watershed projects work with landowners, urban and rural. In Iowa, examples of common problems include sediment (soil), excess nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus) and bacteria. Conservation practices help keep them out of our water.

CLEANER WATER FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

Better water quality can be a boon for local communities. Cleaner water creates a healthier home for fish and wildlife, which can mean better fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and increased tourism for local communities. Improving

water helps our quality of life, with cleaner water for drinking and increased recreational opportunities. Watershed work can also help slow runoff water to reduce the risk of flooding, protecting roads, bridges and property. It also helps maintain valuable farmland by keeping soil and nutrients in place and out of our waters.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, WE CAN HELP

You can make a difference by gathering people in your community together to improve your stream, river or lake. Then partner with your local soil and water conservation district (SWCD), the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship–Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to get your project rolling. Please explore the other inserts in this folder to learn how your SWCD, DNR, DSC and NRCS can help you make the biggest splash you can in improving Iowa's water.



The watershed diagram above shows how water runs downhill. Making changes on the land keeps pollutants from rural and urban areas from washing into our water.